

**STABILIZATION OF COOKED PASTA COMPOSITIONS
USING WHEY FROM NISIN-PRODUCING CULTURES**

ABSTRACT

- The present invention provides fully cooked, ready to heat and serve
- 5 pasta compositions which are stabilized against the development of toxins from pathogenic bacterial contaminants under refrigeration conditions for 120 days or more. The stabilized pasta compositions are attained by the incorporation of nisin-containing cultured whey derived from a nisin-producing culture. The cooked pasta compositions of this invention, which
- 10 include both filled and unfilled pasta compositions, are stable at refrigeration temperatures for 120 days or longer and require no further cooking (i.e., the pasta is fully hydrated and only requires warming before serving). The nisin-containing whey can be prepared by forming an aqueous composition comprising sweet whey from the fermentation of a cheese, whey protein
- 15 concentrate, and a protein hydrolysate; fermenting the aqueous composition with a nisin-producing culture until the pH attains about 5.5; maintaining the pH of the fermenting composition at about 5.5 for 8-10 hrs; and allowing the pH of the fermenting composition to drop to 4.8 or lower. The nisin-containing cultured whey can also be prepared by inoculating a pasteurized dairy
- 20 composition with a culture of a nisin-producing microorganism, incubating the composition until the pH attains a value between about 6.2 and about 4.0 and a whey and curd mixture is formed, and separating the whey from the whey and curd mixture to give the separated whey which is the nisin-containing cultured whey. The pasta of the present invention is prepared from pasta
- 25 dough comprising about 55 to about 80 percent high protein wheat flour, about 1 to about 5 percent wheat gluten, 0 to about 20 percent egg product, 0 to about 3 percent dough conditioner, sufficient nisin-containing cultured whey to provide about 200 to about 1200 IU nisin/g pasta dough, and sufficient water to provide a total moisture content of about 25 to about 35
- 30 percent. Sauces and/or fillings included with the pasta compositions are

preferably prepared using the same or similar nisin-containing cultured whey compositions to provide increased stability.